Belmont Stakes Preview

Contributed by Anthony Stabile of VegasInsider.com
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With the defection of Kentucky Derby winner Street Sense, some may feel this Saturday’s 139th running of the Belmont Stakes has a “two down, one to go” type feel, with just seven or eight horses lined up for the “Test of the Champion.” While you can’t argue with the fact that the race has lost some of its luster, it’s still the third jewel of the Triple Crown and one of my personal favorite races of the year. Maybe it’s because I’m a lifelong, born and bred New Yorker or the fact that I’ve spent most of my springs and summers at Belmont Park, but I love the Belmont Stakes. After the Derby, it’s one of the more exciting races of the year and despite a rather small field, I think this years running will be just as good as some of the past renewals. Like the Preakness, the Belmont usually brings together a mix of battle-tested sorts that have already tried their hand in either or both the Derby or the Preakness as well as several new faces whose connections think the mile and half will suit their horse perfectly. Boy, I wish I had a dollar every time I’ve heard that one. This year is no different, as five runners have already run in a Triple Crown event while three or four more will be taking their first and only shot at one of the classic three-year-old events.
Editor’s Note: Be sure to purchase Anthony Stabile’s winning horse selections on a daily basis, including Saturday's Belmont Stakes. Click to win! From a wagering point of view, I think the three horses that will take the most action, in order, at the windows will be Preakness winner Curlin, Derby runner-up/Preakness third place finisher Hard Spun, and the filly Rags to Riches. I’ll get to them tomorrow. Today, let’s take a look at those that figure to be the longer shots in the field. The horse that seems to be getting some attention, one that actually may wind up being the “wiseguy” pick in the race is Slew’s Tizzy. Trainer Greg Fox, a former vet took over this colts training late last year and got him to break his maiden in his third career start over the Polytrack at Turfway Park back in mid-January. Since then, it’s been all stakes races for this son of 2000/2001 Breeders’ Cup Classic winner Tiznow. His two Fair Grounds tries were disasters. This is the colt that triggered the almost catastrophic accident involving Circular Quay in the Risen Star, clipping heels on the far turn and followed that performance up with a next to last place finish in the Louisiana Derby. Then, Fox decided to remove the blinkers and return to the Polytrack, this time at Keeneland for the Lexington which is traditionally used as a last gasp effort to get onto the Derby which is just two weeks later. Under Robby Albarado at over 40-1, Slew’s Tizzy wired eight other rivals on his way to a stunning upset score. After contemplating a Derby run, Fox decided against it and sent his charge to Lone Star Park for the Lone Star Derby, a race he won over a sloppy, sealed course by almost two lengths. Since that victory, Slew’s Tizzy has been training at the Thoroughbred Training Center in Lexington, Kentucky near Keeneland and finished up his serious preparations for the race this past Saturday going a half mile in :48 1/5 which was the fastest of 31 works at the distance that day. Originally, John Velazquez took the mount but when Todd Pletcher announced that Rags to Riches would run, Fox let Velazquez off his horse and reached out for Rafael Bejarano, who will now be in the saddle this Saturday. Originally, Fox tried to get Edgar Prado to ride Slew’s Tizzy but his agent said no, saying that there may be another horse entered into the race. He turned out to be right as trainer Nick Zito decided at the eleventh hour to enter Preakness fourth place finisher C P West in the Belmont. In the Preakness, C P West broke well from the nine post before being caught wide on the first turn. Still, Prado, who’ll be back aboard on Saturday, seemed to be in a great spot before inexplicably moving this son of Came Home four wide as soon as Mario Pino made his move towards the leaders with Hard Spun. After moving into contention at the fastest point of the race, the wide trip and perhaps lack of seasoning finally got to C P West as he wound up fourth. When you take into consideration the fact that the three horses that beat him were the 1-2-3 finishers in the Derby and he was beaten less than six lengths, his race is much better than it appears on paper. Since the Preakness, Zito did say he would back off C P West and point him towards a summer campaign. But when Street Sense opted out, Zito decided to take a shot. He’s been training at Saratoga and last worked this past Friday, going a half mile in :49 2/5. Tiago is one of two horses that raced in the Derby then skipped the Preakness to await the Belmont. Two starts back, his first without blinkers, this half brother to 2005 Derby winner Giacomo shocked the Santa Anita Derby field, coming from next to last to get up in the final strides at over 29-1. In the Derby, breaking from post 15, Tiago never really got into contention as they got too far away from him early on after some fast fractions for him to make much of an impact. Still, he closed well to pass more than half the field in the last half mile of the Run for The Roses, missing third by less than two lengths. With five weeks between races, trainer John Shirreffs has had plenty of time to get this son of Pleasant Tap ready, working him four times. He completed his serious training for the Belmont last Sunday at Belmont, going six furlongs in 1:14 4/5. Mike Smith will be back aboard this Saturday. The other Derby starter that will contest the grueling mile and a half this Saturday is the Bill Kaplan trained Imawildandcrazyguy. After a second place finish earlier this year in the Risen Star, this gelded son of Wild Event was off the board in both the Louisiana Derby and Florida Derby and was sent off at over 28-1 in the Kentucky Derby. Last early on throughout much of the race, it appeared as if he was destined to be another also ran that put forth another also ran performance. But all that changed at the 3/8 pole as he began to run by horses before finally finishing fourth while spicing up and otherwise chalky Superfecta in the process under Mark Guidry. On Sunday, in one of the most unorthodox training methods ever conceived, the Brooklyn-born Kaplan breezed his charge three furlongs in :37 at Belmont. While that’s fairly normal, the fact that the breeze was sandwiched in between two six furlong gallops is not. Guidry, who’ll be retiring at summers end will be back aboard this Saturday. There are two other horses that were being considered for the Belmont whose connections are re-thinking their positions now and probably will not run because of the presence of Rags to Riches. They are Time Squared and Digger. Time Squared is a well bred sort, but he’s

beaten only one horse in his two stakes tries and would appear to be overmatched at this point against these. And if he’s overmatched, Digger shouldn’t even be allowed in the same county as these other runners in here as his participation should be considered nothing more than an egotistical, attention mongering stunt by his owner. Editor’s Note: Be sure to purchase Anthony Stabile’s winning horse selections on a daily basis, including Saturday's Belmont Stakes. Click to win!

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